

# A Condensed Transcript of Senate's Hearings With Rusk

*Following is an unofficial and condensed transcript of hearings before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee with Secretary of State Dean Rusk.*

**Chairman J. William Fulbright:** All of us in the Senate, and particularly members of this committee, have been fully informed on the policies this administration intends to follow in the immediate future in Vietnam. We believe the announcement is most timely and after. If there is a decision to send more men to Vietnam, we should have a reasonable time to discuss it. That is, of course. Our experience in this regard has not been satisfactory during the period in which we have had to get gradually into this disastrous situation. This is in the best interests of the country. We should have the opportunity to register our approval or disapproval, not when it is already too late to draw back before the situation reaches full scale, all-out war with the possible involvement of nuclear weapons if it begins.

**Secretary Rusk:** President Johnson has consulted Congress more than any recent president on a great many of these problems. He has done so because his meeting is a consultation, and I believe the views of the members of this committee have been made very clear.

Fulbright: I failed to learn anything yesterday as to your future plans on escalation. I find some hope in reports there are differences of view within the administration.

Rusk: These decisions are basically for the President to make. We have no intention of discussing the Constitution, the Congress, the issues involved in the Tonkin Gulf resolution which authorized the use of armed forces if necessary.

Fulbright: Are you saying publicly that you have no intention of consulting with this committee? You believe you have the right that we gave you the full authority with that resolution to make these decisions without consultation? That resolution was approved after a one hour and 40 minute briefing by officials of the White House which has clearly proved to be untrue. No reasonable man could say there had been no provocation for the attacks in the Gulf of Tonkin. It is also true, at least, it is equivalent, I personally feel there was what any reasonable man would call provocation. Are we or are we not going to be told in advance what you are going to do?

Rusk: I said the President has reached no conclusions, and that we have no intention of telling us what he has decided to do.

Fulbright: I concluded you mean you have no intention of telling us what he has decided to do in your mind. We get more information from the newspapers than we do from the administration. Frankly I don't believe him. That's the executive, not the executive. You say the President hasn't made up his mind. To me, that means you won't tell us until he has reached the decision.

Rusk: The views of this committee are pretty well apparent. I would say there is not much mystery about your views.

## People Appreciative

Fulbright: Everything we do is affected by the war in Vietnam. People are apprehensive about the whole picture there and at home. I have been here a period in the past 10 years when we have been distracted by so many different difficulties. I think the war has had a role to play in solving them, and I think we could make a contribution. The whole feeling now is that we are at a turning point; that is, we either go on with the war, or an all-out war or pull back and put our emphasis on seeking negotiations.

Sen. Mike Mansfield: There is no question that the prime responsibility for these decisions rests with the President. We cannot make decisions for the President, but we can advise him in this things our way. That was proved when we unanimously adopted a resolution requesting a new effort to take Vietnam came in a resolution of the Senate made in a committee of the Senate. We apparently decided the time was not right for that. These sense of Congress resolutions have no validity, no power, and they must try to be here to get full consultations before the takeoff.

Sen. Albert Gore: A resolution other approach is disapproved. Vietnamese were very fruitful. I doubt if either would pass the Senate. The other thing is to avoid a catastrophic stalemate between President and Congress which would be no more satisfactory than the military stalemate in Vietnam. We need to come to a decision that policy, and have not had it in the past. I do not see the Senate could have saved us from this horrific mistake in Vietnam, this disaster, and we are in a catastrophe. We all make mistakes, but we have seen that the mistake the Senate made in action, and we are here to make statements without sufficient question has contributed to a tragedy for their country.

Sen. Fred Thompson: I am not satisfied with what is going on in Vietnam. I want to see it come to an end as much as anyone. But in the meantime, how do we do that? We will be fed by the media, this kind of a televised discussion in Hanoi. What greater service could be rendered to the side of the United States? I think Congress should vote on something; we shall take one position or the other, and then stop all this talk.

Sen. Stuart Symington: I do not understand that kind of talk,

I am on both the Armed Services and the Foreign Relations Committees and on the pre-parliamentary subcommittee. Now every month we put out reports critical of some phase of our effort in Vietnam. I think enough ships, or such and nobody has any plains about it. Yet the minute we get to the political situation, which is of equal importance, we have a lot of criticism about helping Hanoi.

Fulbright: The Senator is precisely correct. I cannot accept that what we are doing is against the national interest.

## No Talk Inhibitions

Rusk: There has been no limitation of discussion of all aspects of this situation. There has been no limitation of discussion, and we give every attention to all views. We cannot sit here and dispose of these educational questions in any arbitrary manner. We should try to find some common points as a basis for discussion. Everyone agrees, for instance, that Cambodia should have a chance to live at peace, and I doubt there are many points on Vietnam itself of which there is no agreement. We should search for elements of agreement and then seek to reconcile our differences. I will be able to do my best in this effort, in the best good spirits and without, but without all the world looking in. There is no difference between the administration and the administration's preference for a negotiated settlement.

Sen. Clifford Case: You said one point of general agreement that Cambodia or Laos has

the right of a country to exist apart from its own independence, ability to preserve its sovereignty.

There is a weakness in

your assumption, and we should not base policy on the basis of

anyone's assumption. A condon-

ation of existence is the right of a country to protect itself.

To say there is an inherent right

of this sort is the kind of over-

simplification which leads to

gross oversimplification and of diffi-

culty in today.

Rusk: The right of all nations to live free from aggression is

stated in the charter of the United Nations.

It is a fundamental principle of

small nations by outside powers

is what led to World War II.

Unless we resolve these prob-

lems on the basis of a society of

equal rights, the right of self-deter-

mation, and the right of the poor

and the haves are in direct

competition, the struggle is ac-

centuated, and we return to the

right of the jungle.

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